

The South African races of the Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Gmelin

by MR. P. A. CLANCEY

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Three races of the Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Gmelin are recognized from the South African subcontinent by Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 47; Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 159; and Peters, *Check List of the Birds of the World*, vol. v, 1945, p. 145. The races concerned are *C.s.striatus* Gmelin, 1789: Cape of Good Hope; *C.s.minor* Cabanis, 1876: Natal; and *C.s.rhodesiae* Grant and Mackworth-Præd, 1938: Umtali, eastern Southern Rhodesia. The characters separating these races consist in the main of differences in the amount of black on the throat and in the colouration of the feet, which are dark purplish in *C.s.striatus* and *C.s.minor* and dull pinkish red in *C.s.rhodesiae*.

Through the courtesy of the Directors of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, and the Museu Dr. Alvaro de Castro, Lourenço Marques, I have recently been able to assemble a large body of material, the study of which reveals that four nomenclaturally recognizable races of *C.striatus* occur within the confines of the South African subcontinent.

The nominate race of *C.striatus* is confined to the Cape Province and the southern parts of the Orange Free State. It is a race characterized by rather large size and pale colouration, the lower ventral surfaces being usually pale buffish white, and the dark greyish throat is largely obscured by prominent silvery apices to the gular feathers. An intermediate group of populations occurs in Pondoland and adjacent areas, the majority of specimens of which resemble *C.s.striatus* in the throat character but the Natal and Zululand race, *C.s.minor*, in the deep cinnamon wash over the abdominal surfaces.

As I have already pointed out (*vide Durban Museum Novitates*, vol. iv, 13, 1955, p. 201), the race of Natal and Zululand is scarcely smaller than the nominate subspecies, but there are other important and perfectly valid racial characters. As has just been noted, *C.s.minor* has the lower ventral surface strongly washed with cinnamon, while the throat is distinctly blacker, less greyish. Furthermore, the black of the throat is not so obscured by the pallid feather apices, and other less salient though perfectly valid differences are the more purplish grey cast to the breast feathers and slightly darker upper-parts, wings and tail. Most recent authors state that *C.s.minor* ranges from Natal northwards to northern Portuguese East Africa and to southern Nyasaland, but study of the ample material now available to me shows that is not so, and this race appears to be confined to Natal, Zululand and the elevated interior of the Transvaal.

In the low-lying country of north-eastern Zululand, eastern Swaziland, eastern Transvaal "lowveld" and southern Portuguese East Africa occur populations the birds of which resemble *C.s.minor* in the nigrescent

throat, but differing from it in the reduced amount or absence of cinnamon on the lower ventral surfaces, rather duller breast colouration and slightly paler upper-parts, wings and tail. These populations approximate very closely in their characteristics to *C.s.striatus*, though the blacker throat is sufficiently prominent as to warrant their separation therefrom. In the light of the information now available it would seem best, from the point of view of desirable taxonomic accuracy, to recognize these populations of the south-east African lowlands as an additional race, rather than to continue associating them with the more richly pigmented *C.s.minor*. In considering the application of a name to such a race, consideration must be given to *Colius kirbyi* Sharpe, *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, vol. xxi, 1907, p. 32: Lydenburg, eastern Transvaal. Study of Transvaal material shows that most of the populations of the high interior are virtually the same as topotypes of *C.s.minor*, while the "lowveld" birds are paler below, thereby resembling those of Portuguese East Africa. In the eastern high country, *i.e.*, the Transvaal Drakensberg, intermediate populations occur, and it is to such populations that *Colius kirbyi* Sharpe applies. In the circumstances, I believe it would be more satisfactory to leave the name *C.kirbyi* in the synonymy of *C.s.minor*, as placed by Peters, *loc. cit.*, and to describe the eastern low country race as new, fixing the type-locality at or near sea-level in Portuguese territory. The name *C.s.integralis* mihi is introduced below accordingly.

In the eastern districts of Southern Rhodesia and adjacent highland areas of Portuguese East Africa occurs the fourth South African race of the Speckled Mousebird. *C.s.rhodesiae* differs from *C.s.integralis* in being more brownish, less clear grey on the upper-parts, wings and tail, and in having the abdominal surface slightly more washed with cinnamon. The main racial characteristic of *C.s.rhodesiae* is, however, not in the colouration of the plumage but in that of the feet (described on collectors' data labels as "dull red," "dull claret," etc.), which are dull red or pinkish red and not dark purplish brown or purplish slate, as in the three other races occurring in South Africa. This difference is clearly observable even in old museum study skins, the dried feet of *C.s.rhodesiae* being usually a light reddish brown, while those of *C.s.striatus*, *C.s.minor* and *C.s.integralis* are blackish slate.

The nomenclature, characters and ranges of the four South African races of *C.striatus* are detailed in synoptic form as follows:

1. *Colius striatus striatus* Gmelin

Colius striatus Gmelin, "Systema Naturae," vol. 1, pt. 2, 1789, p. 843: Cape of Good Hope, South Africa.

Upper-parts, wings and tail pale brownish grey. On ventral surfaces, throat dark grey, the feathers with broad silvery grey apices; breast and flanks greyish buff finely vermiculated with a darker shade; abdominal surface buffish white or pale buffish cinnamon. Feet dark purplish brown. Wings ♂♀ 91-96.5 (94.1) mm.

Material: 65.

Range: Cape Province, mainly in the south-western, southern and eastern districts, and in the southern parts of the Orange Free State. Intergrades with *C.s.minor* in Pondoland, East Griqualand and adjacent regions.

2. *Colius striatus minor* Cabanis

Colius minor Cabanis, *Journal für Ornithologie*, vol. xxiv, 1876, p. 94: Natal. Synonym: *Colius kirbyi* Sharpe, *Bull.B.O.C.*, vol. xxi, 1907, p. 32: Lydenburg, eastern Transvaal.

Similar to *C.s.striatus* but slightly darker on upper-parts, wings and tail. On under-parts noticeably different on account of the more blackish throat, which is less obscured by the pallid apical fringes of the feathers. Also slightly darker on the breast and flanks, and with the abdominal surface and crissum heavily washed with deep cinnamon. Averaging smaller in size.

Wings ♂♀ 86.5–96.5 (91.0) mm.

Material: 60.

Range: Natal, Zululand, north-eastern Orange Free State and most of the Transvaal. Intergrading with the next subspecies in northern Zululand, western districts of Swaziland, and in the eastern Transvaal Drakensberg.

3. *Colius striatus integralis* subsp.nov.

Closely resembles *C.s.minor* in the deep blackish throat, but differs in lacking the strong cinnamon wash over the abdominal surface and crissum, in which respect it approximates closely to *C.s.striatus*. In addition to having a blacker throat, *C.s.integralis* differs from *C.s.striatus* in being darker and greyer on the cheeks and sides of the head, and in having the breast and flanks rather darker. Similar in size to *C.s.minor*.

Wings ♂♀ 87.5–94 (91.9) mm.

Material: 60.

Type: ♀, adult. Vila Luiza (Marracuene), Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa. At sea-level. 11th September, 1955. Collected by Durban Museum Expedition. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 90, culmen from feathers 12, tarsus 22, tail 206 mm.

Range: Extreme north-eastern Zululand, eastern lowlands of Swaziland, eastern Transvaal "lowveld," southern Portuguese East Africa, and in some districts of south-eastern Southern Rhodesia (mainly between the Bubyne and Sabi Rivers) northwards in the low country to southern Nyasaland (mainly east of the Shire River) and Zambezia, northern Portuguese East Africa. Precise limits in the north not determined.

4. *Colius striatus rhodesiae* Grant and Mackworth-Praed

Colius striatus rhodesiae Grant and Mackworth-Praed, *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, vol. lviii, 1938, p. 65: Umtali, eastern Southern Rhodesia.

Differs from *C.s.integralis* in being rather browner, less clear grey on upper parts, wings and tail. Lower ventral surface lightly washed with cinnamon. Foot colouration quite different, being dull red or pinkish red, not dark purplish brown. Similar in size.

Wings ♂♀ 88–91 (89.6) mm.

Material: 14.

Range: Eastern highland areas of Southern Rhodesia, and in the adjacent highlands of southern Portuguese East Africa. Recorded by Roberts as occurring at the Victoria Falls (very doubtful) (*vide* White and Winterbottom, *Check List of the Birds of Northern Rhodesia*, 1949, p. 66).

Colius striatus berlepschi Hartert.

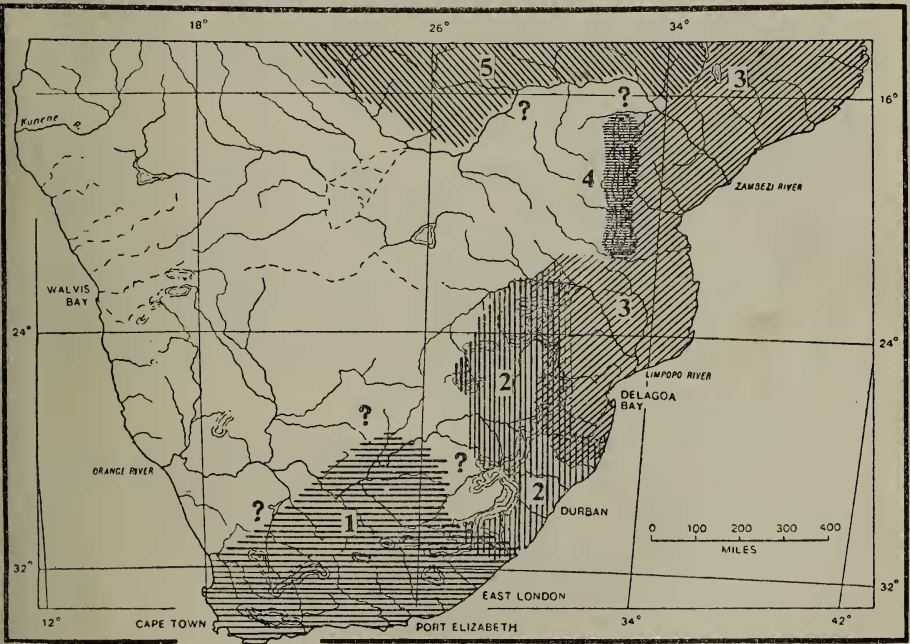
Colius leucotis berlepschi Hartert, in Ansorge's *Under the African Sun*, Appendix (Birds), 1899, p. 333: New Helgoland, north-eastern shore of Lake Nyasa.

This race conceivably occurs within South African subcontinental limits, as it ranges south to western Nyasaland and most of eastern Northern Rhodesia. It can be expected to reach the valley of the Zambesi River at points to the west of the range of *C.s.integralis*. It should be noted that *C.s.berlepschi* is now considered to be distinguishable from *C.s.affinis* Shelley, 1885: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika Territory.

COLIUS STRIATUS Gmelin

Map showing the approximate ranges of the southern African races of the Speckled Mousebird

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| 1. <i>C.s.striatus</i> Gmelin | 4. <i>C.s.rhodesiae</i> Grant and Mackworth-Praed |
| 2. <i>C.s.minor</i> Cabanis | |
| 3. <i>C.s.integralis</i> Clancey | 5. <i>C.s.berlepschi</i> Hartert |
- Cross-hatching represents zones of racial intergradation.



A New Form of *Malimbus nitens*

by MR. C. M. N. WHITE

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Malimbus nitens moreaui subsp. nov.

Description: differs from both the other races of *M. nitens* in its longer wing, 91–97 mm. against 83–92 mm.; and longer bill, 21–25 mm. against 20–21 mm.